No. 36

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF
WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

A startled look came into her eyes as she began to straighten up. Again he called her, his arms raised, eager to embrace her.
R. of M. G., No. 36.

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UTTERLY obvious to the many eyes which rested questioningly upon her. Ruth watched Douglass from her box in the theater with constantly increasing admiration. And the time came when she feared for herself.

But why should she not taste the cup of pleasure? She had been basely deceived by her husband. Guy had gone to Paris with a young chorus woman as his traveling companion.

If he gave his affection to another woman, surely she had a right to give it to another man.

Ruth learned to love the handsome actor because she found him irresistible.

She struggled valiantly against the inevitable, and then she weakened at a moment when she needed her strength most.

Little did she dream that she had taken a step that could never be retraced.

But way down in her heart remorse had begun to gnaw. She was doing wrong and she knew it. Several times she had been the target of sharp criticism fired at her by a society matron.

"Your conduct with that actor is outrageous," this woman had told her. "You had better stop it before it is too late."

And Ruth went to her room and wept.

The following day she received an anonimous letter threatening exposure if she met Douglass again. She had just finished reading the letter when the maid announced the arrival of the actor.

In a scarcely audible voice she gave orders that Mr. Douglass be admitted.

The next moment he was coming toward her strong, handsome and smiling radiantly. He gave her one glance then stopped short.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "Has anything gone wrong, dear?"

She swayed helplessly for a moment, his arm supporting her.

"It's nothing," she said waveringly and sank wearily upon the divan where he made her comfortable with pillows. "I am tired, very tired."

"Ah, I wish I had you to take care of," he cried passionately.

"Hush, Vernon. You must not."

"Why? We are alone, aren't we, Ruth. No one can hear us."

"I must not listen to you—never again," she whispered and buried her face in the cushions.

"Tell me what has happened?" he pleaded.

"Oh, nothing," she answered evasively. "I am only tired—tired of everything."

"Tired of me, too?" he cried, staring hard at her.

"Perhaps."

Douglass had been sitting beside her, but he got up suddenly at her last words.

His face was hard and set, flushed as if it had been struck by a friend. Then he walked across the room, dainty with its feminine beauties he had learned to know so well.

He took a few steps while his hands worked nervously behind his back.

"Come here and sit down," Ruth whispered.

He obeyed her in silence.

"I have been thinking of a good many things these last few days," she said very slowly. "And I have come to the conclusion that it is best for both of us that I send you away. We must not see each other again."

Douglass looked at her curiously, then in a flash he saw that she was in dead earnest.

"You—you can't mean it," he gasped.

She nodded her head wearily.

"We have been good friends for quite a little while," she began. "Your coming has made a terrible change in my life. You made me love you when I knew it was wrong. That was my fault. I am not blaming you in the least. I should have known better as the wife of another man.

"I shall never be able to forgive myself for that. But it must end—now. People are beginning to talk. They are saying things. They are——"

"What are they saying?" he demanded.

"That you are my husband's best friend. That I—oh, you know what I mean, Vernon."

He stood up his hands clenched.

Then he swept one hand across his eyes, as if to brush something away that was blinding him. He loved this creature more than his own life.

His attempt to speak was a dismal failure. His voice wavered, then died in his throat.

For one brief moment he gazed at her with his very soul in his eyes, then turned away. It seemed that he had gained the mastery over himself.

She was right. He must never see her again if her association with him meant the destruction of her peace of mind and happiness.

He almost ran to the door.

But Ruth weakened at the crisis. She leaned forward with her arms outstretched. She was not prepared to lose him in that manner.

"Come back," she cried.

Douglass stopped with his hand on the knob.

"Why do you make it so hard for me to go," he said in a low, trembling voice. "There must be no turning back now. I am going away."

"No—no," she answered in a caressing whisper. "I did not mean it."

"But how can I stay, Ruth? You are plainly unhappy. I am entirely responsible for it. I realize it fully. It will be hard for me to give you up. I would love you if you were the president's daughter. I would love you if you were a miserable pauper in rags. We must say goodby now."

He turned the knob and was about to leave. Again her voice stayed him.

"Please come back—just for a moment."

"Do you want me to stay?" he asked in an awed whisper.

A vague flush crept into her cheeks. Her lovely eyes were filled with intense anguish.

She arose from her cushions and went to his side. For a moment she rested her hands on his shoulders, then she drew his head down and whispered a few words into his ear.

"I know it would be madness to receive you again under this roof," she went on in feverish haste. "But we could meet elsewhere. It would be quite safe."

His face lit up suddenly when he saw that she drew her head aside with a half smile. What she had told him was something he had not expected.

After holding her in his arms for a moment he kissed her passionately and pulled her over to a convenient divan.

For a long time they sat close together and talked of the immediate future.

But Ruth was making the mistake of her life in agreeing to meet the actor away from her home.

A married woman may receive her husband's friend under his own roof and allow him to make love to her, but to meet him in a public place was something

even the most corrupt society folk would not condone. That was traditional.

When Douglass left Ruth's home that night, he did not expect to return. And it was not necessary. Had she not promised to come to his cozy bachelor apartment?

And why not? Had he not promised that he would marry her as soon as she procured a divorce from her husband?

But men of Douglass' type seldom marry the women they love. It has been said that actors make poor husbands. That is not an entirely correct statement.

Actors are simply impossible as husbands.

Moreover, why should they burden themselves with a wife when women deliberately offer the diversion they crave?

That was exactly how Douglass felt with regard to his latest flame, notwithstanding the fact that he had promised to marry the beautiful young Mrs. Fillmore.

Then other conditions arose which made such a union impossible. Society folk began to say ugly things. They could not be denied.

Ruth felt the sting of scandal monger far worse than did the actor. She was being ostracized on every hand. Even the few loyal friends who remained no longer invited her to social functions.

And then, about a month later, Ruth learned that her husband was in New York.

This information came in the form of a document sent by his attorney, apprising her of the fact that she had been made the defendant in a suit for absolute divorce.

She read it over a few times and burst into a laugh.

"Well, I expected it," she murmured and smiled.

"I suppose Vernon will be glad to hear it. I'll call him up and tell him."

Ruth had Douglass on the wire in a few moments.

Her voice was high with excitement as she read the document to him. And then, after she had finished, a long space of disquieting silence followed.

"Vernon—Vernon!" she cried. "Why don't you say something? Aren't you glad? We can be married as soon as I am free."

Again silence.

"I don't think it is wise to discuss that over the telephone," he replied at last. "You better come over to my apartment to-night and we'll talk about the matter then."

She did not like the sound of the actor's voice.

"You might at least say that you are glad, dear," she pouted.

"Well, to be frank, I can't say that I am," Douglass confessed. "You see, that affair of ours got me into hot water with the producer. I received a warning yesterday that unless I cut loose from you, my contract will be terminated at once. So you see the fix I am in."

Ruth scented what was coming, and her eyes blazed with anger.

"But you promised to make me your wife!" she cried, her voice quivering. "Do you think for a moment that I——"

"Please don't put it that way," the actor cut her short. "We both made a bad mistake. I can't afford to ruin my future on account of a woman. As I told you before, I am in trouble already."

She gave a gasp.

"So then you—you don't mean to marry me, Vernon?" she wailed, her anger gone.

The only answer she got was a click which told her that the speaker at the other end had hung up the receiver. Ruth dropped back, her face frightfully pale. Even her lips were bloodless.

"The end!" she gasped. "So that is the end. Oh, God help me!"

Her mind tortured with the worst fears, she waited for night to come. She could not bring herself to believe that her lover would utterly forsake her now that she needed him most. No, he still loved her, of that she was quite sure.

She had been able to make him do anything with a smile and a little coaxing. One time he had told her that he was a slave to her charms.

Well, she could still smile and coax. And she still had her charms.

With hope refusing to die within her, she dressed with greatest care and went to call on Vernon Douglass in his bachelor apartment.

The actor's valet admitted her with the usual bland smile.

"I am sorry, madam," he told her. "Mr. Douglass has left the city."

"Left the city?" Ruth gasped.

"Yes, he was called to his home in the west by the death of a near relative," the valet replied, "but he left a note for you. Wait a moment and I'll get it."

Ruth did not enter the cozy den where she had spent so many blissful moments.

She leaned against the wall near the door, her limbs paralyzed. She took the sealed envelope from the valet, smiled wanly, and then departed.

She could hardly wait until she reached her apartment before she read her lover's message. Somehow she suspected the worst.

Her telephone conversation with Douglass had not left much room for doubt on that question. With trembling hands she broke the seal.

"My dear Ruth," the actor wrote. "Existing conditions make continued friendly intercourse between us impossible. You do not know how I shall miss you. I have gone——"

She did not read any further. With a low cry of rage she tore the letter into shreds.

"Oh, the coward!" she moaned. "The miserable coward! I know why he left New York so suddenly. He found out that my husband is suing for divorce and he doesn't want to be drawn into it. And he professed to love me! Now I am alone—utterly alone!"

Being alone would not have hurt poor Ruth so much as the bitter realization of the fact that she was about to become a branded woman.

Chapter 118

AN ACCIDENT.

BETTY HARDING'S return to life was nothing less than a miracle. It seemed that fate, in a favorable mood, had decided that she should live. But her escape from Dr. Stanford's sanitarium was still seriously in doubt. She was standing behind her unexpected friend and protector, holding her breath. The next minute would tell the story.

Out in the corridor someone was prowling about. The brawny arms of the fugitive were raised to strike, and strike to kill if that someone, be it man or woman, entered.

But presently all became silent once more.

Upon opening the door, Betty's companion perceived that the corridor was empty. Without wasting any more time, he seized her hand and drew her after him.

They reached the outside unseen, and began a quick search among the immediate surroundings. Some distance back from the main building stood a garage.

All his hope centered upon what he would find there. Fortunately it was unlocked.

Again fate deemed to be kind to Betty and her new-found friend.

Of the three cars in the garage, one, a Dodge coupe, had been used recently and the owner had failed to take the key from the ignition switch.

"Well, if that isn't luck, my name ain't Dick Harris!" the man exclaimed in a whisper. "Here we are with an automobile all ready to take us anywhere we

want to go. Get in."

Betty, still a trifle weak, was assisted into the machine. Harris turned on the light and looked about.

Hanging on a hook in the wall he discovered some men's clothing. It was just what he needed. No one would be able to recognize him as an escaped convict in those clothes.

The change was made swiftly. Then he took a seat beside Betty, and started the car. It moved smoothly and with very little noise.

By the time the fugitives reached the country road Betty's fear of being recaptured vanished.

The cool night air gave her strength and courage. When the man smiled down at her, she gave him a grateful smile in return.

"How do you feel now?" he asked solicitously.

"Quite well," she answered simply.

"That's good." Harris said. "Now keep up your courage. We shall be safe soon."

On and on sped the car, eating up mile after mile. Then suddenly, with something like a grunt of protest, it stopped.

Harris drew to the side of the road and got out to see what the trouble was.

He was just in the act of raising the hood when he saw two big men coming toward him.

He recognized them at once. They were the same prison guards who had been pursuing him. Harris pretended not to notice them, and he took a firm grip on the wrench he was holding.

"What's the trouble?" one of the guards asked. "Stalled?"

"It looks that way," the fugitive replied without looking up.

"Too bad." came back in a gruff voice. "We were

just about to ask you to give us a lift."

"I'll be glad to accommodate you if you wait until I get the motor started," Harris answered. "Of course, you'll have to sit on the rear end. These coupes are not built for more than two people, and my wife and I——"

"Oh, you have your wife with you?" the other cut in with a glance at the interior of the machine.

"Yes," said the fugitive nonchalantly.

The two guards walked a few paces to one side and engaged in a whispered conversation.

In the meantime Harris worked dilligently. He was not a novice at repairing motors, but this one baffled him.

Again and again he tried to start the engine, but it simply would not go.

"I guess we are up against it," he said loud enough for the guards to hear. "We'll have to let the car stand here until morning."

One of the men came over.

The fugitive had his cap pulled over his eyes, and only the lower part of his face could be seen in the semi-darkness. And he took precious good care not to raise his head.

"Can't you make it?" the guard inquired sympathetically.

"No, I am afraid not," the other responded. "And that places us in a most disagreeable position. My wife is not in good health. I hate to think of her staying in the car all night. Isn't there a farmhouse near where we might find shelter?"

"Yes," the second guard spoke up. "There is a farm right over yonder," indicating the direction. "It is about a fifteen minute walk."

Harris approached Betty and said something in a low voice.

"You—you are placing me in a horrible position," she replied in a whisper. "Why did you tell those men I am your wife?"

"It was the only way," he told her apologetically. "Now, please be a good sport. There isn't a thing for you to worry about. Your posing as my wife won't hurt you nor me."

"Sorry we can't help you," came from the guard. "Goodby and good luck."

"Thanks," the escaped convict called after the two retreating figures.

Once more alone, Betty and her companion entered into a lengthy discussion. For the present they were quite safe.

The only danger lay in the possibility of Dr. Stanford discovering the woman's escape through the loss of his car. Betty feared this more than Harris.

"If I am caught by that man I am lost," she said in a tone of utter helplessness. "He'll murder me in cold blood."

The fugitive laughed.

"Not while I have my health," he returned. "I think I can handle that man. But let us not cross the bridge until we come to it. I'll try once more to get the engine started. It it won't work, we'll have to walk over to that farm and ask for a night's lodging."

Betty gave an involuntary shudder. The prospect of spending the night as this escaped convict's wife frightened her.

Again Harris worked and his efforts were unexpectedly rewarded.

The engine seemed to be in a friendlier mood, for as he stepped on the starter, it responded with a sudden roar.

But an instant later two bright headlights appear

ed on the road quite a distance back.

"I guess we better be moving," Harris grinned.

He took a firm hold of the steering wheel and stepped on the accelerator.

The machine took the smooth country road easily. On and on they sped, the two bright headlights in the rear following.

At the first road to the right, Harris turned.

He figured that the car back of them would go on and pass them. But nothing of the kind happened.

A low smothered oath crossed his lips when he noticed that they were still being followed. Betty, her eyes glued on the pursuing machine, felt instinctively that it contained Dr. Stanford. And she was right.

The renegade physician had discovered her flight, and at once spread an alarm. He knew that he must recapture the woman.

She must be silenced forever before she had a chance to talk. So with murder in his heart he had gone to his garage accompanied by two of his assistants.

When he found the Dodge coupe gone he shrewdly guessed the rest. Betty had been taken away by an outsider.

This was true enough. But he had no idea that this outsider was an escaped convict running for his life. Of the two remaining cars Dr. Stanford had chosen a fast Pierce-Arrow roadster.

Realizing fully all that was at stake, he set out determined to bring back the woman.

Harris, confident and intensely on the alert, was equally determined that he and Betty should not be caught.

Ahead of him the country road ran on in a straight course.

There was no turnig back nor into any of the

roads crossing it. The least delay meant capture, for he could hear a man's warning shout.

"Stop, or we'll shoot!" came the command.

"Shoot and be damned!" Harris retorted, holding steadfastly to his course.

Once the pursuing car came within a few yards of them. A brilliant search-light flashed up. It's sudden gleam revealed Betty clinging to the escaped convict's arm.

She was exhorting him to put on more speed.

Dr. Stanford, now sure that he was on the right track, uttered an exclamation of triumph.

"That's her, fellows!" he cried.

Twice he attempted to pass the car in front of him, but each time he had to slow up to avoid being hurled into the deep ditch which ran along the country road.

And now he saw that there was only one way left to force the other machine to stop. He pointed his gun at one of the rear tires and fired.

The shot went wild as did three others in swift succession. Swearing viciously, he aimed the next directly at the driver's head.

Harris ducked instinctively as the leaden missile barely touched the lobe of his left ear. He glanced up quickly at Betty and noticed that she was crouching low on the seat beside him.

"Damn them!" he muttered, his breath whistling through his teeth.

That this chase must ultimately end in a tragedy might have been foreseen. And it came with a crash that reverberated on the quiet night air.

Dr. Stanford, wild with anger at being baffled, seemed to have lost all sense of reasoning. His Pierce-Arrow roadster was now going at a terrific rate of speed.

Then suddenly, without a sign of warning, the car

ahead of him came to a stop.

It was too late to apply the brakes.

A shout and a womans scream preceeded the calamity. The next instant the two cars were tangled up in a mass of twisted steel and shattered glass.

That a single one of the occupants of the two cars should escape alive seemed impossible.

They lay, grosquely sprawled, some in the ditch into which they had been catapulted by the frightful impact. The others were caught in the debris, with fractured sculls and broken bones.

Chapter 119

A NEW LIFE

THE DIVORCE of the Fillmores did not take up much time because the defendant in the case refused to appear. The testimony, carefully selected and brought out, showed conclusively that the young wife was guilty of gross misconduct.

There were several witnesses who, questioned by Guy Fillmore's shrewd attorney, admitted having seen Ruth in the company of Vernon Douglass, the actor, entering the latter's bachelor apartment at a late hour.

And thus convicted without a chance to tell her side of the matrimonial tangle, the divorced wife had no claim for alimony.

Of course, Ruth had a right to take possession of all the household effects, which, for a time served to keep the wolf from the door.

But that money she derived from the sale, did not last long.

She wrote a long letter to her brother, which remained unanswered, and Ruth, taking it for granted that Phil had disowned her as a sister, wept the most bitter tears.

And now, thrown upon her own resources, Ruth's social decline was rapid. She had nothing to recommend her except her young beauty.

She soon came to realilze that this was her best asset and she proceeded to make good use of it while it lasted.

Before long, Ruth Gordon, as she chose to be called, became the talk of New York. Utterly indiffer-

ent as to what the world thought of her, she plunged into wild and reckless living.

From New York she drifted to Paris. Here she met a young English naval officer who at once fell deeply in love with her.

Lieutenant Allan Bingham, was an attache to the British Embassy. He was well qualified to hold the important post, and he possessed unusual mental attainments.

But Allan Bingham proved that he knew absolutely nothing about women and their ways when he mistook Ruth Gordon's shrewd acting as a return of his affection.

She coaxed him into a proposal of marriage and was accepted, and for a time they seemed to live quite happily.

When Lieutenant Allan Bingham suddenly resigned his position in the foreign service, his brother officers were only mildly surprised. In fact most of them had expected it since his marriage to Ruth Gordon. She had openly urged her young husband to take this step.

But that was not the real motive for her persistence. Ruth had always been a social climber. And with an opportunity in sight to rub elbows with English nobility, her eagerness turned into impatience.

Ruth was a lovely woman and she was well aware of the fact.

She was anxious to display her beauty in other fields and she looked forward to her migration to England with a great deal of pleasant anticipation.

She never gave a thought to the question as to how her husband's relatives would receive her. As a matter of fact she took it for granted that they would treat her with due respect and consideration.

Her husband was the one who worried about that,

for he knew what a proud woman his mother was.

He was frankly afraid that she would not take kindly to the American wife he had married in such undue haste.

That these fears were not without grounds became evident almost immediately after their arrival.

Lord Bingham, the young man's father, did not come downstairs to greet his daughter-in-law.

He had been suffering with the gout, and it was best for him to remain alone in his room when in that condition, for his temper was fierce.

Lady Bingham greeted her son affectionately. Ruth met with her first disappointment when she was barely privileged to touch the icy finger-tips of her mother-in-law.

The reception she received was so cold, that a wave of resentment swept over her.

She was in a fit of anger as her husband took her to the suite of rooms which had been prepared for them. He quieted her by saying that his mother had not meant to slight her.

He made various other excuses, all flimsy and unconvincing to Ruth. When she retired that night she was a very unhappy woman.

The following morning Lady Bingham appeared to be a little more gracious. Encouraged by this, Ruth tried hard to earn the good will and approval of her mother-in-law.

Unused as she was to English customs, she made many ludicrous mistakes. Several times she caught a disdainful smile on Lady Bingham's face. In her anxiety to rectify her mistakes she became nervous and blundered like an ignorant country maiden.

As the days passed it became more and more evident that the elder Binghams did not take kindly to the

new addition to their aristocratic and noble family.

And they told their son so in plain words.

They resented the intrusion of this American girl, who had only good looks to recommend her.

In their opinion she was not a suitable match for their only son, who some day would become a peer of England and have a seat in parliament.

Ruth's punishment had already begun, for she was being treated like an intruder and snubbed at every turn.

"I can't stand this any longer," she said sobbingly to her husband as they were alone one night. "Oh, I wish I had not come here. Your parents regard me as an imposter. I have never been treated so shamefully in my life."

Allan Bingham knew it well enough and he sought to soothe her.

"Don't make yourself unhappy," he said. "I'll have a talk with mother the first thing in the morning. I'll try my best to adjust these little differences."

And he made good his promise. Lady Bingham was still in her boudoir when her son was announced the following morning. She was partaking of a dainty breakfast which had been brought to her.

After the usual greeting he came direct to the point and made an eloquent appeal in his wife's behalf.

"She is not a bad sort, mother," he ended. "I wish you would be a little kinder to her."

Lady Bingham sniffed scornfully.

"Why, that girl has nothing but a pretty face," she snorted. "Her manners are positively shocking. I suppose she was some rich pork packer's daughter. You must have been insane when you married her. Really, I can not understand it."

"But you sent me congratulations, mother," the

young husband argued. "I thought——"

"Your father was responsible for that." she cut him short. "He always does such impulsive and foolish things."

Allan shrugged his shoudlers.

"At any rate, mother, she is my wife. We are bound to be decent to her."

"Why did you marry her?" the mother asked angrily.

He hung his head because he would rather have cut out his tongue than answer that question truthfully.

"Your father and I had our heart set on you marrying Lady Beatrice Fairfax." the mother went on irascibly. "She is a lovely girl and her family is the best. She is in love with you, and she admitted as much to me.

"Think what it would have meant to you and us if you had married her. Her father, Lord Fairfax has a chance to rise to the presidency in parliament. He stands high and is very influential.

"Another thing, even your most intimate friends are laughing behind your back. You must admit that your common American wife cuts a sorry figure in a drawing room. But that is not the worst of it.

"You gave up your commission for her. And what chance will you have to get a seat in parliament with a wife like that? Your career is absolutely ruined. You will never rise above an ordinary country squire."

The young husband could not find a suitable reply. His continued silence encouraged his mother.

"I am not ready to believe that you would ignore the wishes of your parents entirely for this woman," she went on bitterly. "And surely you are not going to give up all of your old friends for her? We must find some method of having this unfortunate marriage set aside. You will thank me later on for having suggested it."

Allan Bingham still was silent.

He was forced to admit that there was much truth in what his mother said.

He dreaded nothing more than to be ridiculed by his friends. He realized that Ruth was utterly lost in an English drawing room. Her increasing timidity and reticence made her appear rather absurd.

He had caught several of his friends snickering behind his wife's back, and it cut him to the quick.

The more he thought about everything in connection with his hasty marriage, the more he became convinced that he had made a grave mistake. It all dawned upon him when it was too late.

When he left his mother after having received some more very pointed advise, he was in a dejected mood.

The task of reconciling his mother to the continued presence of Ruth seemed indeed a hopeless one. He made another attempt several days later and it failed utterly.

He was forced to humor his wife constantly to make up for the snubs she endured from the other members of the household.

The constant reproaches of his parents as well as the pointed shafts of sarcasm from friends drove him almost to desperation.

And at last he found himself contemplating the final step—separation.

There had always lurked a shadow of bitterness in his heart at the manner in which he had been virtually enticed into marrying Ruth.

And now, as these thoughts crossed his mind, he experienced no pangs of conscience.

He could not have chosen a better adviser than his mother, who greeted him with the old affection as

he made his desire known to her.

"I am glad you have come to this sensible conclusion, my boy," she cried with ill-concealed joy. "That woman is no fit mate for an English gentleman. The quicker you get rid of her the better it will be for all of us."

"But how shall I go about it, mother?" he asked almost childishly.

"Leave the matter in my hands," she told him. "Unless I am very much mistaken, within a month you will have sufficient reason to seek an absolute divorce from your American wife. I know the right kind of a man who will take her off your hands."

Allan Bingham winced slightly.

"I don't like the idea," he objected. "That sort of an——"

"Now don't be squeamish about that, my boy," Lady Bingham interrupted. "I have always felt that this American girl used some dishonorable method in drawing you into her net. I am going to employ the same means.

"All is fair in love and war, and I have been at war with her ever since she came here. She tricked you into marrying her."

While this was partly a random shot on Lady Bingham's part, it came dangerously close to the truth.

"This man you have in mind, who is he, mother?" Allan asked. "Do I know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"Captain Le Mans."

The young husband gave his mother a long look.

"Why, that man is generally regarded as a French spy," he said.

"He is no more a spy than the rest of the French

naval attaches in London," she retorted. "These are times of peace and the French are our friends until they have proven themselves enemies."

Allan Bingham shook his head slowly.

"I don't like Captain Le Mans," he said.

"That much the better, my dear boy. But he is exactly the type of a man we need. Why, when he called here a few nights ago, I caught your wife staring at him as if he was some kind of a demigod. She was fascinated by his tall figure, his handsome face and military bearing.

"And he was eyeing her constantly. I wouldn't be surprised if they were in love with one another already. It looked to me like a case of mutual love at first sight."

"Perhaps he was interested in Ruth because he knew that she is an American," Allan suggested.

"Nothing of the kind," the mother disagreed. "Nationality in a lovely woman makes no difference to men like him. All he is waiting for is a chance to make love to her."

Although the idea was rather distasteful to the former English naval officer, he finally yielded to his mother's plan.

"Very well," he said in a tone of resignment. "I will leave it to you."

"And you must promise not to interfere in any way," the mother insisted. "No matter what happens you must allow me to do as I see fit, and place no restrictions whatever upon the movements of your wife."

He promised and was kissed for it, which terminated the interview.

But Allan Bingham did not leave the room as his mother evidently expected him to do. He walked over to the window and stared at the beautiful lands-

capes.

After a few moments he returned.

"Mother," he said, his voice painfully husky, "I wish we could find some other method —— "

Lady Bingham stopped him with a gesture.

"Now, please, don't weaken, Allan," she said. "I shall handle this situation in my own way. No matter what my method may be, the end, I assure you, will justify the means."

Young Bingham, realizing the futility of attempting to change his mother's mind, bowed his head in silence, and left the room.

Chapter 120

CAPTAIN LE MANS

N THE following day Ruth was not a little surprised when she received an invitation from her mother-in-law to go driving with her Lady Bingham seemed very gracious and chatted in the most agreeable manner. It had come so unexpectedely that Ruth was at a loss how to construe it.

"You must come and have tea with me, my dear," Lady Bingham said as they returned. "You know, you are almost a stranger to me since you insist upon shutting yourself up in your room."

Ruth did not know what to make of this sudden change in Lady Bingham's conduct toward her.

She took it for granted that her husband had succeeded in winning his parents over, that they had relented and that at last she was to be taken into the family bosom.

The limousine had stopped in front of a fashionable restaurant on Trafalgar Square.

A footman assisted the two ladies to the ground and stood respectfully waiting for further instructions.

"You may drive home, Jenkins," Lady Bingham ordered briefly.

The man touched his cap and a moment later the machine glided away.

Upon entering the restaurant Ruth was ushered into a very cozy private room furnished in beautiful Oriental style. Tea was served instantly, and the young American was beginning to find the first real enjoyment

since her coming to England.

Lady Bingham had just grown confidential when the door opened and Captain Le Mans entered.

"Pardons the intrusions, ladies," he said, clicking his heels together and standing erect. "I saw you enter and I came to pay my respects."

Judging by his correct English the speaker belied his nationality. He was an unusually handsome man of perhaps thirty, with deep-set blue eyes and curly dark hair. His natty uniform fit him like a glove.

"You know you are always welcome, captain," Lady Bingham replied as she rose to give her hand to Le Mans. "Come, have some tea with us."

"With pleasure, my lady."

Captain Le Mans divested himself of his sword and trappings, then took a seat between Ruth and Lady Bingham.

The latter remained silent as the handsome Frenchman engaged her daughter-in-law in a conversation. That Le Mans was an adroit conversationalist became at once apparent.

And he had a strange way of leading Ruth into telling him just exactly what he wanted to know.

"You Americans are remarkable," he declared. "Particularly the women. I do not wish to say that they are more beautiful than the English, but they have the dash, and they are more self-reliant."

"Have you met many American women?" Lady Bingham inquired with a smile.

"Indeed, my dear lady," Le Mans responded. "I spent three years in Washington. And I dare say those years were the most pleasant in my life. I surely love America——"

"And Americans," Lady Bingham interposed with a little laugh.

"You almost trapped me into making an admission," the French naval attache grinned sheepishly. "I do not wish to embarrass Mrs. Bingham."

"Please don't mind me, captain," Ruth laughed heartily as she entered into the spirit of the thing. "And since you have said such nice things about American women, I might return the compliment by saying that in my estimation French officers are the finest men in the world."

Captain Le Mans did not laugh. He looked serious.

"It is sometimes hard to live up to what others think of us, my dear Mrs. Bingham," he said soberly. "I have always tried my very best and shall try doubly hard since I may count you among my friends."

Lady Bingham glanced at her diamond-studded wrist watch.

"Oh, I almost forgot," she cried. "I have an appointment with my solicitor. If I do not return, you will see to it that my daughter gets home safely."

"Certainly," Le Mans cried. "I shall consider it a privilege and an honor to conduct so charming an American lady home."

With a nod to Ruth and a handshake with the captain, Lady Bingham took her departure. It seemed a little strange on the face of it, but Lady Bingham was known for her many eccentricities.

As soon as she was gone, Captain Le Mans moved his chair closer to Ruth.

"I can not tell you how happy I am to have a few minutes alone with you, Mrs. Bingham," he began, his fine blue eyes searching hers. "Without wishing to flatter you American women, I confess that I perfer them to those of my own country in some respects."

"That is base disloyalty to your mother, your sis-

ters and perhaps your wife," Ruth smiled.

"I have no wife," he replied quickly, ignoring what else was said. "So long as I am in the diplomatic service of my country, I shall never marry. And when I do, my wife will be an American girl."

Ruth was somewhat at a loss for words. During the conversation which followed she began to feel somewhat nervous.

It was entirely too personal.

And yet she was not offended. She frankly liked this handsome big French officer, whose hearty laughter was like that of a boy. It contrasted strangely from the silly chuckle affected by the English.

"You are a woman of extraordinary intelligence," he told her after a pause. "Most American women are like that. I suppose that is the reason these stupid English——"

"My husband is an Englishman," Ruth said reprovingly. "Please remember that."

"For how long?" Le Mans raised his eyebrows. "He'll be your husband until Lady Bingham finds some good reason to have the marriage annulled. Now please don't be offended at what I said. It is better for you to learn the truth now."

Ruth's face paled, then slowly her cheeks crimsoned.

"Do you know why I came here?" the French officer continued, lowering his voice. "I was invited by Lady Bingham to be here exactly at this hour. Do you know why she left us alone? To give me a chance to make love to you.

"That excuse of having an engagement with her solicitor was fabrication pure and simple. Now I'll tell you something else. When you reach home, you'll be informed that your husband has been sent away by his

father on some urgent business matter, and that he will be gone for several weeks."

The young wife sat rigid in her chair.

"I—I won't believe it," she gasped. "Lady Bingham would not be so base as to deliberately seek to compromise me in order——"

"Lady Bingham is one of the proudest women in London," Le Mans cut her short. "And she is also the most unscrupulous. I do not know how you have been treated since you came here, yet, I'll wager that you have been snubbed more than once."

"But Lady Bingham was so kind to me to-day," Ruth argued. "She even spoke of giving a ball in the near future in my honor."

Captain Le Mans laughed.

"She is capable of doing all that, my poor deluded friend. And you will have plenty of these so-called 'male vamps' hanging around you. And your husband will be away. The hole will be dug for you to jump in."

Ruth was speechless. A wave of hot anger suddenly surged over her.

"Oh, if I could only believe what you say, Captain Le Mans," she cried, her hands clasping and unclasping nervously. "I have been snubbed unmercifully. Yes," she added vehemently, "they made me feel as if I were dirt under their feet, but I stood it all."

"Sure you did, like every other plucky American girl would," the Frenchman responded. "But you are fighting against overwhelming odds. Lady Bingham is determined to separate you from her noble son."

The American wife did not answer.

A dangerous glint had come into her eyes. What at first appeared unbelievable loomed up like the hideous truth now.

Le Mans was watching her stealthily. He was

playing a little game of his own.

To make this American girl hate the Englilsh was his first step, and he was succeeding admirably. He felt the glow of victory in his heart, for she leaned toward him and said in a hoarse whisper:

"First I must be convinced, captain. And when I am convinced, Lady Bingham and her son had better be on their guard."

Chapter 121

SAVED!

NOT A great many miles from Oak Manor was the Talbot estate. Victor Talbot, the present owner, was an exceptionally fine man of thirty. Always a lover of the outdoors, he preferred living in the country to being cramped up in a city business office.

He was a scientific farmer, and he was a credit to his calling as well as the human race. Even his enemies —and he had a few of them—could not speak evil of him without ignoring the truth.

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Continued in next number

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were his continual thoughts. Under the impulse of this inspiration he informed the chief of the magical power of these cards, which in possession of an enemy would cause dire disaster to his family as well as himself. Thoroughly frightened the chief gave this treasure to Korn and escorted him to the seacoast far from his place of captivity. After various wanderings and adventures he arrived at the German colony Kameron, where he secured a position on board a Hamburg merchant ship; and through these events we became possessed of the *Genuine Cards*, the handwritten interpretation and instructions how to use them.

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